

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 HA-05 TRSE-00 /087 W

-----021659 161424Z /45

R 161150Z JAN 78

FM AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 145

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRAZZAVILLE 0049

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SHUM, CF

SUBJECT: NGOUABI ASSASSINATION TRIAL

1. HENRI CHOUKROUN, FRENCH NATIONAL, ARRIVED BRAZZAVILLE JANUARY 11 TO OBSERVE NGOUABI ASSASSINATION TRIAL ON BEHALF OF INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (FIDH). JANUARY 12, CHOUKROUN WHO, UP TO THAT POINT, HAD NOT MADE OFFICIAL CONTACT WITH GOCB, APPEARED AT TRIBUNAL TO WITNESS PROCEEDINGS. HE WAS ASKED FOR DOCUMENTATION AT ENTRANCE, AND PRODUCED FRENCH PASSPORT INDICATING THAT HE WAS ENGAGED BY FIDH. GUARD BROUGHT PASSPORT TO PROSECUTING ATTORNEY OKOKO WHO, BEFORE COURT AND MEDIA, WENT THROUGH PASSPORT COMMENTING ON VISAS. WHEN HE REACHED AN ISRAELI VISA IN CHOUKROUN'S PASSPORT, OKOKO SHOUTED THAT CHOUKROUN HAD NOT RECEIVED AN EXIT VISA FROM ISRAEL, ASKED RHETORICALLY WHETHER CHOUKROUN HAD COME FROM ISRAEL OR FRANCE AND, ON BEHALF OF GOCB, HE SAID, DENIED CHOUKROUN PERMISSION TO ATTEND TRIAL. ALL THIS WAS HEARD BY CHOUKROUN ON LOUD SPEAKER MOUNTED OUTSIDE TRIBUNAL, WHERE HE WAS FORCED TO WAIT. FOLLOWING HIS DEPARTURE FROM TRIBUNAL, CHOUKROUN WAS INTERROGATED BY CONGOLESE SECURITY.

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FOLLOWING HIS MANY EFFORTS TO HAVE COURT PRESIDENT ASSEMEKANG AND OTHERS REVERSE DECISION, CHOUKROUN WAS ORDERED BY SECURITY TO DEPART CONGO NIGHT JANUARY 13. CHOUKROUN MET CHARGE FOR FIRST TIME PRIOR TO LEAVING FOR AIRPORT, EXPLAINING WHAT HAD HAPPENED. HE NOTED THAT HE INDEED HAD AN EXIT VISA FROM ISRAEL, BUT ARGUED THAT THAT HAD NOTHING REALLY TO DO WITH THE CASE. HE INFORMED CHARGE THAT FRENCH AMBASSADOR DUFOURCQ HAD

TOLD HIM THAT HE WAS UNWILLING TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THE MATTER. CHARGE TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO PUT CHOUKROUN IN CONTACT WITH PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR EKONDY, BUT WITH ONLY A HALF HOUR TO FLT TIME, AND EKONDY AWAY FROM HOME, IT WAS DIFFICULT. CHOUKROUN PLANS PRESS CONFERENCE IN PARIS JANUARY 14, AT WHICH TIME HE SAID HE WOULD EXPLAIN TO PUBLIC THAT WHILE THE FORM OF THE NGOUABI TRIAL MAY BE DEMOCRATIC, ITS RESULTS WERE PREORDAINED. CHOUKROUN DID ACKNOWLEDGE THAT HE HAD BEEN HERE TO BRIEFLY TO CONCLUDE THAT WITH MUCH CONVICTION. HE ALSO WAS GRATEFUL TO EMBASSY FOR AT LEAST TRYING TO REACH EKONDY.

2. COMMENT: AS WE HAVE REPORTED (NOTAL), TRIAL HAS INDEED HAD SOME UGLY MOMENTS AND CHOUKROUN EXPULSION HARDLY WILL ABET CONGOLESE EFFORTS TO DESCRIBE PROCEEDINGS AS FAIR AND OPEN. IT MUST BE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT WHILE PROSECUTOR OKOKO IS GRAND-STANDING DAILY, PROCEEDINGS, TO WHICH WE LISTEN CAREFULLY, STRIKE US AS FAR MORE JUDICIOUS THAN WE WOULD HAVE IMAGINED. WE DO BELIEVE THAT DEFENDANTS WHO HAVE BEEN HEARD THUS FAR ARE BEING GIVEN FULL CHANCE TO ARGUE THEIR POSITION AND THE DEFENSE AN OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT THEM.
KATZEN

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